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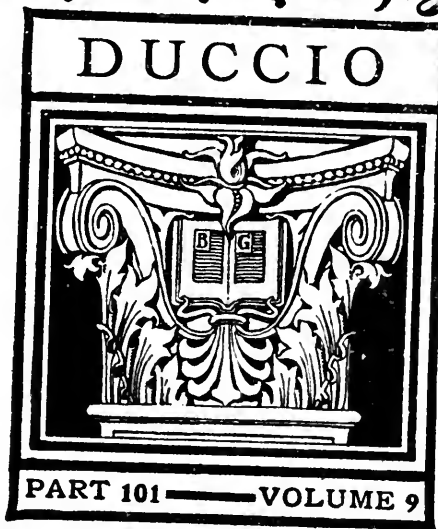
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PRICE, 15 CEN

Masters in Art

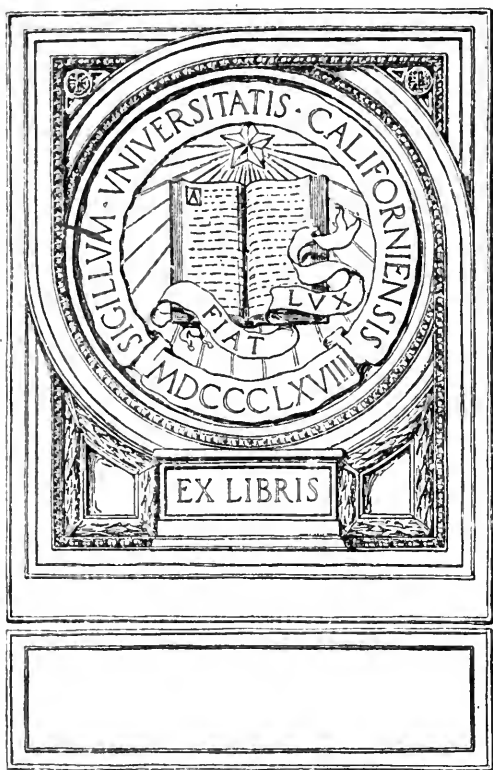
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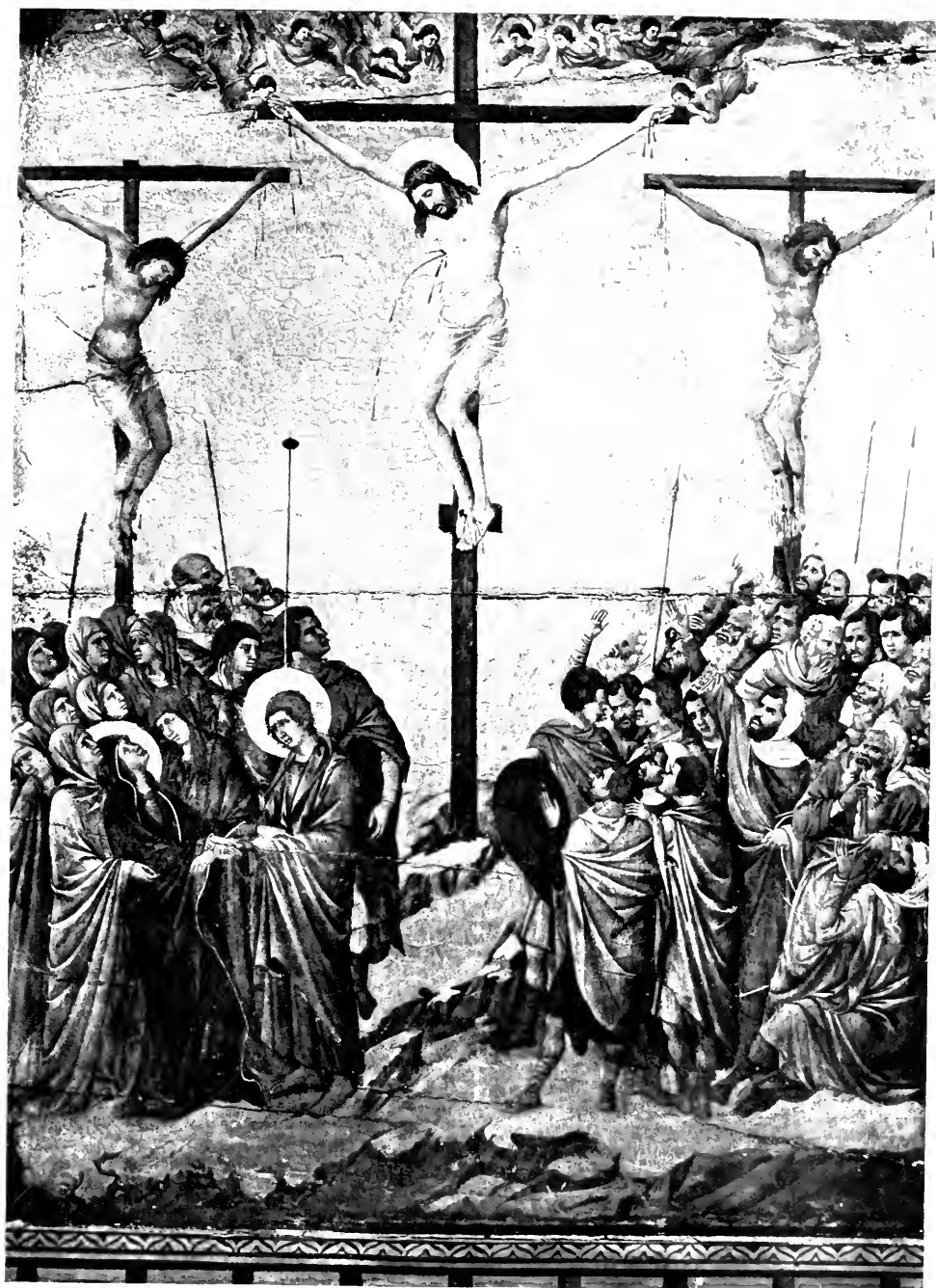
Duccio

SIENESE SCHOOL

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DUCCIO
TRIPTYCH
NATIONAL GALLERY, LONDON

MASTERS IN ART PLATE V
PHOTOGRAPH BY HANSTAIN
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TO THE
UNITED STATES
AIR FORCE



DUCCIO
THE MAJESTAS
CATHEDRAL MUSEUM, SIENA

70 VINI
ABSOLUTE



TO VINU
AMBOFLIAO



MASTERS IN ART PLATE VIII
PHOTOGRAPH BY LOURADU
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10. 11. 1910
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NO. 1011
ANNEXED

Duccio Di Buoninsegna

BORN ABOUT 1260: DIED AFTER 1339
SIENESE SCHOOL

DUCCIO DI BUONINSEGNA (pronounced Dootch'chĩ-ō dee Bwōn'-ēn-sāne-ya) is the greatest Sieneese master of painting. He bears much the same relation to this school that Giotto does to the Florentine; but while the latter school was in a constant state of development for two centuries, producing painters as great and even greater than Giotto, the development of the Sieneese school for some reason was arrested in its early stages. Duccio was its first and greatest exponent, and with the men who came immediately after him far exceeded his later followers, even allowing for the greater knowledge of the scientific problems of painting.

Very little is known about Duccio's life. The name Duccio may be the termination of Orlanduccio or Guiduccio, diminutives of Orlando and Guido, and the Buoninsegna was his father's name. The date of the artist's birth is not known, but is conjectured to have been about 1260, as the earliest record of Duccio in any archives is made in 1282. A small panel of a Madonna in the Museum of Nancy bears an inscription, believed to-day to be a forgery, to the effect that it was painted by Duccio in 1278.

In the event of his having been born in 1260, he would undoubtedly have been influenced by the great work of Niccolò Pisano, who was called to Siena in 1268 to execute the reliefs for the pulpit of the Duomo. Guido da Siena is the only artist who preceded Duccio in his native city, a much repainted Madonna by whom decorates the wall of the great hall in the Palazzo Pubblico. The date on this picture of Guido's was until recently supposed to read 1221, but Signor Milanese, the brilliant and scholarly annotator of Vasari, and editor of documents relating to the history of Siena, has interpreted it to read 1281, though this is still a mooted question. How much or how little Duccio may have owed to Guido we cannot decide, nor are we able from anything in his work to fix upon any one man as having been his master. Lorenzo di Ghiberti says that Duccio painted "partly in the Byzantine manner, but partly also in the manner of the moderns," and to quote from Mr. Berenson: Duccio "owes his style to the influence of the best Byzantine masters of the time: in all probability he studied at Constantinople." Vasari, who devotes only a very few pages to Duccio, says that he invented the decoration of the

pavement of the Cathedral of Siena with marble pictures in chiaroscuro. But this is a false statement. This use of marble was known before Duccio's time, as is proven by a fragment remaining in the pavement of the cathedral at Lucca. It is composed of red, white, and black marble, and depicts a group of men and animals. There is an inscription stating that it was executed in 1233.

In 1285 we have the records in the archives of the Church of Santa Maria Novella in Florence of a contract made on April fifteenth with Duccio for a large altar-piece of the Virgin and Child and other figures to decorate the altar of the Chapel of the Fraternity of Santa Maria. He was to receive for this work the sum of one hundred and fifty florins, furnishing his own paint and gold, and to pay a fine of fifty florins for non-fulfilment of the contract; and if the completed picture did not suit them, Duccio was to keep it himself. Mr. Stillman, in his 'Old Italian Masters,' thinks the terms of this contract point to the fact that Duccio was not as yet an acknowledged master, and yet shows that he had already acquired some fame, or he would not have been called to paint so important a picture for Siena's great rival, Florence. Signors Crowe and Cavalcaselle think that he never fulfilled the contract; for they argue that no picture of his exists there, that it is not mentioned by historians, and that in October of 1285 there are records of a payment being made him for the decoration of one of the books of the *Bicchierne* (account-books of the town of Siena), and that it would seem from records of other payments as if he were appointed to the position of town-treasurer, somewhere about this time, and continued in office until 1291. Signor Milanesi thinks the picture was painted by Duccio, but lost. Later critics, notably Dr. J. P. Richter and Mr. Langton Douglas, recent editor of Crowe and Cavalcaselle's 'History of Painting,' think that the famous altar-piece in Santa Maria Novella called the 'Rucellai Madonna' and since the time of Vasari traditionally ascribed to Cimabue is this work contracted for by Duccio (plate III). They argue on these grounds:

First, documentary, already cited — that a commission was given Duccio for a picture and there is no further record of any payment of a fine by Duccio for non-fulfilment of the contract. Furthermore, there is absolutely no record of any commission having been given Cimabue. Secondly, as to its name, Rucellai, and its present location. The Chapel of the Society of the Virgin is the same as that which was afterwards known as the Bardi Chapel in the right transept in Santa Maria Novella. In 1335 the Bardi family had come into possession of this chapel, re-decorated it, and doubtless removed the 'Madonna' picture in question to the wall of the church outside the chapel, where it hung in Vasari's time. Later on the altar-piece was placed in the Rucellai Chapel, and hence the name which has become attached to it. (On stylistic grounds see description of plate III.)

It is known that in 1302 Duccio was painting a 'Madonna' for the Chapel of the Palazzo Pubblico in Siena, because the payment of forty-eight livres for work already finished is recorded in the books of Siena, but neither the picture nor any other facts concerning it have ever been discovered.

On October 9, 1308, Duccio contracted with Jacopo, son of Gilberto

Mariscotti, master of the works of the cathedral, for his great picture of the 'Majestas' for the high altar. This was Duccio's great and authenticated masterpiece, in comparison with which all other works must be considered. It was stipulated in the contract that he should devote his whole time to its execution, until it was completed, for the consideration of receiving sixteen soldi (sixteen cents) a day, the panels and the material being furnished him. In December Duccio is known to have obtained fifty livres payment in advance and to have set earnestly to work. This picture, painted in tempera, comprised a panel, fourteen feet long by seven and a half high, of the Madonna and Child enthroned, surrounded by saints and angels (plates VI and X). In the pinnacles and predella were small panels depicting scenes from the Infancy of Christ and the Death of the Virgin. As this picture was to be put upon the altar, at that time placed directly under the dome of the cathedral, where it could be viewed from all points, on the reverse side were depicted in four rows twenty-six scenes from the Passion of Christ, all being of the same size, excepting the two representing the beginning and end of the Passion — 'The Entry into Jerusalem' and 'The Crucifixion' (plate II) — which were double the size of the others. The pinnacles and predella of the reverse side were in turn filled with scenes from the life of Christ, and those which took place after the Resurrection. These panels are now framed separately and hung beside the other parts of the 'Majestas,' and it is thought that the panel of the 'Nativity' (plate IV) in Berlin and the panels by Duccio in the National Gallery of London and in Mr. Benson's collection are also parts of this same altar-piece.

On June 9, 1310, the altar-piece was carried in triumph from Duccio's shop, or house, outside the gate at Stalloreggi, to the cathedral. A holiday was proclaimed in Siena, shops were closed, and the procession, headed by the archbishop and clergy, followed by the "Nine" of the Government and the officers of the Commune, brought up in the rear by women and children, holding lighted tapers, wound around the Piazza Signoria on its way to the cathedral. One critic suggests, however, that this procession was of a wholly religious character, and the fact that the picture had great artistic merits was a "mere accident." An ancient chronicler relates that the picture cost three thousand golden florins (one thousand pounds), and took three years to finish. Another tells how Duccio, while he was painting the picture, began each day by 'making festa,' meaning in all probability that the artist began the day with prayer, and that on Sundays he attended service at the cathedral with great devotion. It would seem that the picture was not finished before being taken to the cathedral, for in a meeting of the "Nine" on November of that same year there is a record of payment for the reverse of the picture at the rate of two and a half golden florins per panel.

The triumphal removal of Duccio's masterpiece is described by an almost contemporaneous chronicler, and is a well-authenticated fact; for in the Siena archives there is an account of twelve livres, ten soldi spent for trumpeters and tapers used on the occasion. The similar tradition in regard to the so-called altar-piece by Cimabue, already referred to, being carried to Santa Maria

Novella, was probably invented by Vasari in the sixteenth century, or perhaps by earlier Tuscan chroniclers, in jealousy of the fame of their rival city's great artist.

This altar-piece of Duccio's replaced one previously set up by the Sienese to commemorate their victory over the Florentines at Montepertoso in 1260. Duccio's great panel remained in place about two hundred years; then the altar was removed farther to the east into the chancel, and the 'Majestas' was placed in a side chapel, to make room for a bronze tabernacle by Vecchi-etta. Ghiberti saw Duccio's great work and praised it, but curiously called it a 'Coronation of the Virgin.' At an earlier time it was stored in a closet of the Opera del Duomo or Cathedral Museum. This accounts for the fact that Vasari, who knew the picture by reputation, relates that he had never seen it and did not know what had become of it, repeated Ghiberti's mistake in calling it a 'Coronation.' It is due to the influence of Mr. Charles Fairfax Murray, an English painter, that the 'Majestas' is at present exhibited in the Cathedral Museum, where it can be studied at leisure, the large panel having long since been sawed in two lengthwise, and the predellas split up into their component parts.

Vasari relates that Duccio painted an 'Annunciation' for the Church of the Santa Trinità in Florence, which has unfortunately been lost. If he painted works for the churches of Pisa, Lucca, and Pistoja they also have been destroyed. Vasari is authority, also, for the story that Duccio, in 1348, designed the chapel added to the façade of the Palazzo Pubblico. This chapel was ordered in 1348, as a votive offering for the cessation of the plague, but as it did not satisfy the Sienese, was torn down four times and not completed until 1376. Milanesi thinks that the master of works at the cathedral, and not Duccio, was the designer.

Besides the works already mentioned, a much injured polyptych, and a triptych or two, are scattered in the museums of London, Berlin, and Siena, but the master's great fame will rest on the wonderful altar-piece for the Siena Cathedral, and not, as Vasari relates, on his invention of chiaroscuro pictures in marble. Some recently deciphered manuscripts tell us that Duccio was occasionally condemned for debt, and was once heavily fined for some unknown offense, and on one occasion refused to swear allegiance to the Captain of the People; but neither the year of his death nor any further facts of his personality are known. Milanesi in his 'Documenti dell'Arte Senese' writes that no mention is made of Duccio in any records after 1320, and it has been inferred that he died about this time. In a later work, 'Notes on Vasari,' Milanesi writes that no mention is made of Duccio after 1339, putting his death at least nineteen years later. His pupils are thought to have been Segna da Buonaventura, Simone Martini, Pietro and Ambrogio Lorenzetti, and perhaps Ugolino.

The Art of Duccio

ROGER E. FRY

'ART BEFORE GIOTTO' FROM 'THE MONTHLY REVIEW'

THE presence in Siena of a number of Byzantine paintings, which have been there ever since the thirteenth century, suggests the probability that Siena, which arrived at municipal self-consciousness even before Florence, had called in the aid of Byzantine masters for the decoration of her churches. Before this importation of Byzantine masters Siennese art was of that crude, almost barbaric, type to which the early Christian classic style had by that time degenerated. One such work, a Madonna and Child, is in the Gallery at Siena, where it affords a striking contrast to the accomplished productions of Eastern artists. In the works of Guido da Siena Byzantine influence already completely overshadows the original native tradition, but it is in the works of Duccio di Buoninsegna that it finds its most perfect expression.

In looking at Duccio's works for the first time we are startled by an extraordinary paradox.¹ For in Duccio we have the first Italian painter of surpassing merit, and we expect to find in the work of a man who was older than Giotto the rude and vigorous vitality of a germinating art.² We expect to see the struggle of genius with the untamed facts of nature, the keenness and freshness of youth overcoming, by sheer force of will and intensity of desire, the difficulties due to ignorance and inexperience. But when we look at Duccio's great altar-piece at Siena we find an artist who is fluent and accomplished, one who executes with certainty and ease everything he attempts. There is nothing here that is tentative or experimental. The fact is that Duccio's art is hundreds of years maturer, more staid and less naïve, than Giotto's. Certain types, it is true, that belong rather to the new French conceptions find their way into the kneeling figures of his 'Majestas,' but in the cycle of New Testament subjects on the back of the altar-piece he shows himself entirely subject to the Byzantine tradition; and the tradition thus adopted by him had been so thoroughly organized and exploited, the types had been so constantly refined on, so often distilled, as it were, by successive generations of artists, that there are some who feel in looking at his work that it is academic and over-ripe. He arouses in them the same feeling of staleness and cold accomplishment which they get from the works of the later Rafaelesque and Michael Angelesque designers.³ Certainly Duccio's work is a striking proof that artistic accomplishment and facility of execution have nothing to do with the extent of the artist's knowledge of natural forms. It depends rather on the artist's attitude — whether he is trying to compress fresh observations of nature into his formula, or whether he is concentrating his powers, as Duccio did, upon the perfect rendering of already well-ascertained facts. . . .

In all the scenes of the altar-piece the same holds true. It is not in the dramatic vividness of the gesture and expression of individual figures, but in the silhouetting of the groups and their distribution in the panel, that Duccio's great imaginative power is felt. The swaying crowds beneath the vast out-

lines of the crosses in the crucifixion, the pathetic yearning implied in the mere outline of the group which stretches up to receive the dead body in the deposition, the retreating curves of the three Marys, expressive of their amazement at the supernatural apparition which they find so majestically and negligently poised on the edge of the sepulcher — these are the means by which Duccio makes his appeal to our imagination, and not by any intimate understanding of the individual actors of his scenes. In his insistence on the awfulness of the supernatural vision at the sepulcher, rather than on the human elements of the event, he proclaims his sympathy with the Byzantine ideals, his distinctness from the new dramatic conceptions which the purer Italians had already begun to realize. Duccio was, in fact, a master of verisimilitude rather than of dramatic verity, a master of elegance rather than of vitality. He was far more the finished product of the old Christian debased classic tradition as practised at Constantinople than the herald of that neo-Christian art the emergence of which in painting will form the subject of the next essay.

BERNHARD BERENSON

'THE CENTRAL ITALIAN PAINTERS OF THE RENAISSANCE'

OUR interest lies not in the origin, but in the enjoyment of the work of art, and for enjoyment it is enough to know that painting as an art was flowering toward the end of the thirteenth century within the walls of "soft Siena," then, as always, sorceress and queen among Italian cities.

The first flower of this new growth, the flower from whose seed all Siennese art sprung, was Duccio di Buoninsegna. For this reason, and because he was so typical of his time and school, and anticipated so much that was characteristic of all Central Italian painters — for all these considerations, we must dwell on him at some length.

✠ All that the mediæval mind demanded of a painter Duccio perfectly fulfilled. It was the chief business of the mediæval artist to rewrite the stories of the Saviour, and of His immaculate Mother, in pictographs so elaborate that even the most unlettered could read them. At the same time these pictographs were intended to be offered up as a sacrifice, along with all the rest of the furnishing and actual decoration of God's holy house, and for this they were to be as resplendent as gold and skill could make them. In the hands of a man of genius the pictograph could transform itself into great illustration, and the sacrifice into great decoration. Did they suffer this change at the hands of Duccio?

Let us look for answer at the paintings on the reredos that once enclosed with splendor the altar of as proud a temple as Christendom could show. Now it molds away in the museum outside the Cathedral of Siena, without interest for men, and consequently no longer a fit sacrifice to God. Their metallic luster, the green and gold, give to these panels such an aspect of subdued sumptuousness as we expect not from paintings, but from bronze reliefs — from Ghiberti's 'Gates of Paradise.' For the person who approaches them with all his theories safely put to sleep, and his mind on the alert for

the distinguishing notes in what he is about to perceive, there is a glamour compounded of sensuous appeal and spiritual association in the first flash of this mysterious work. It is like the binding of some priceless illuminated manuscript, inlaid with ivory, adorned with gold, and set with precious stones. As you look closer, it is as if you had turned the covers of a book wherein you beheld a series of splendid illustrations. The long-familiar stories are here retold with a simplicity, a clearness, and a completeness that, alongside of the blurred images these tales usually evoked, must have seemed to most of Duccio's contemporaries like the buoyant sparkle of the morning after groping dark. And not this alone: Duccio did not merely furnish the best attainable pictographs. He gave the stories all the value that he, as a man of genius, felt in them; he lifted his spectators to his own level of perception. . . .

* Expression, then, and interpretation, grandeur of conception, and depth of feeling — the qualities most essential to great illustration — Duccio possessed to the utmost, and this implies that he had sufficient control also of form and movement to render his effects. There remain two other requisites without which the art of illustration limps rather than leaps. These are grouping and arrangement. That Duccio possessed both these in addition to his other gifts we shall be persuaded if we look at several more panels of the Sienese reredos. . . . (See description of plate VIII.)

On first looking at his reredos, we were struck by the glamour of its subdued refulgence. Touching us as the gold of old mosaics touches us, to which time has added a tinge of bronze, Duccio's panels attune our mood for the enjoyment of whatsoever they may present. This is doubtless direct and intrinsic, and yet it has small value from an artistic standpoint; for the pleasure thus derived rises but little above that which the mere material itself would give. You would get as much and more from old goldsmith's work, from old stuffs, or from old embroideries. The sensation is still too undifferentiated to be of moment in those arts which, like painting, depend but slightly upon materials in themselves pleasurable. But, as we looked closer at Duccio's pictures, we noticed certain qualities essential to good illustration, which, we shall now see, have great decorative value also. How admirably Duccio makes us realize space we have observed but now, and we can here forego returning to the subject. That it is a quality, however, too specifically artistic to be required by mere illustration, the work of most illustrators of our century, whether popular or profound, could prove.

In yet another respect we have already found Duccio eminent — in his grouping. We have dealt with it hitherto only in so far as it concerned clearness of rendering; but Duccio went farther, and so grouped as to produce effects of mass and line, pleasant to the eye in and by themselves, and pleasantly distributed within the space at his command. In other words, he composed well. . . . (See description of plate IX.)

If Duccio was so sublime in his conceptions, so deep in feeling, so skilful in transcribing them in adequate forms; if, in addition to all these merits as an illustrator, he can win us with the material splendor of his surfaces; if he composes as few but Raphael, and can even make us realize space, why have

we heard of him so seldom, why is he not as renowned as Giotto, why is he not ranked with the greatest painters? Giotto was but little younger, and there could have been a scarcely perceptible difference between the public of the one and the public of the other. Most of Giotto's paintings now existing were, in fact, executed rather earlier than Duccio's reredos. Is the illustrative part of Giotto's work greater? On the whole, it certainly is not; at times it is decidedly inferior, seldom having Duccio's manifold expressiveness and delicately shaded feeling. If Giotto, then, was no greater an illustrator than Duccio, and if his illustrations, as illustrations, correspond no more than Duccio's to topics we crave nowadays to see interpreted in visual form, and if, as interpretation, they are equally remote from our own conception and feeling; if, in short, one is no more than the other a writer of pictorial leaders on the entrancing interests of the hour, why is the one still a living force, while the other has faded to the shadow of a name? There must exist surely a *viaticum* which bears its possessor to our own hearts, across the wastes of time — some secret that Giotto possessed and Duccio had never learned. . . .

✓ Tactile values and movement, then, are the essential qualities in the figure-arts, and no figure-painting is real — has a value of its own apart from the story it has to tell, the ideal it has to present — (unless it conveys ideated sensations of touch and movement). . . .

And now to return to Duccio. His paintings do not possess these virtues, and therefore have been nearly forgotten, while Giotto's works contain them to a degree so remarkable that even to-day the real lover of art prefers them to all but a very few masterpieces. For Duccio, the human figure was in the first place important as a person in a drama, then as a member in a composition, and only at the last, if at all, as an object whereby to stimulate our ideated feelings of touch and movement. . . .

A few instances will prove my point, and I choose them among subjects which not only lend themselves to specifically pictorial treatment, but even seem to suggest such treatment on Duccio's part. Let us turn again to the now familiar 'Incredulity of Thomas.' . . . Look at Thomas, as long as you regard him as a mere shape in a given attitude and with a given action, he probably corresponds to reality more than do your visual images, and you find him pleasant. But once look for something within this shape, and you will be surprised, for you will find, not, it is true, a complete lack of tactile values, but only just enough to make the figure pass as a familiar shape, and no more. Thomas is draped in the very best way for enabling one to realize his corporeal and functional significance, but unfortunately — although he is perhaps the best modeled figure in Duccio's entire works — there is not enough under his robe even to persuade one of reality, not to speak of stimulating one's own internal activities; and as for the action, it is scarcely indicated at all. He certainly seems to move, yet the legs have not the slightest existence under the drapery, admirably arranged as it is to indicate the action of the limbs it ought to cover; and the feet, while sufficiently resembling feet, have almost no weight and certainly do not press down on the ground. If we look at the Christ in this same composition, we find that He does not stand at all. . . .

A question suggests itself at this point, which requires at least a brief answer. If, as results from all that we have just now been observing, Duccio either had no feeling for tactile values and movement or was too busy elsewhere to attend to them, why has he chosen attitudes and actions which seem to suggest an absorbing interest in them? . . .

The answer is, I think, simple. Duccio did not choose them, but found them ready made, probably the entire compositions, certainly the single figures; for it is, to me at least, inconceivable that a painter who had perhaps no feeling for tactile values and movement, and certainly no interest in rendering them, should have invented motives calculable chiefly as opportunities for modeling and action. Duccio, I repeat, must have found these motives ready, and used them, not for what their inventors had valued in them, but for the mere shapes and attitudes as dramatic factors in illustration. To him, then, form and movement — the two most essential elements in the figure-arts — had no real meaning of their own. He exploited them as a dilettante, but did not understand their real purpose; and herein again Duccio, the first of the great Central Italian painters, was singularly like the last of them; for Raphael also saw in tactile values and movement not the principal pursuit of the artist, but a mere aid to illustration.

Such, then, was Duccio. Had he been less, it might have been better for the art of Central Italy; for then either a painter of perchance more talent would have had room to expand freely or else the example of Giotto would have been more attractive. Duccio, however, not only trained his followers to conceptions and methods necessarily his own, but by furnishing to an emotional people such as the Sieneese an art that appealed to the feelings he compelled the painters who came after him to deal in that perniciously popular article, expressive illustration.

LANGTON DOUGLAS

‘A HISTORY OF SIENA’

IN one great artistic quality, in the power of imparting relief to his figures, Duccio, it is true, was much inferior to one of his younger contemporaries, to Giotto. He had considerable knowledge of the structure of the human body, but he had not Giotto's consummate power of selecting just the lines, the convexities and concavities, in a face or in drapery, which when rendered in paint convey to us, better than any others, a sense of its material reality. And yet Duccio had an adequate sense of form; and in other great qualities of decoration he is the Florentine's superior. He is much greater as a colorist. He has a finer technique in tempera painting. He can give more poignant expression to deep emotion. He has a more subtle sense of beauty. He is not inferior to Giotto as a master of lineal design. He shows a more accurate observation of nature in his drawing of the nude, as in his representations of rocks and of trees. In a measure he anticipates the discoveries of the quattrocentists in his treatment of landscape. Why is it, then, that the world knows so little of Duccio? Why is his name so rarely on men's lips? The answer is not far to seek.

Firstly, the really independent critics of painting are very few in number.

[199]

The majority of cultured people, consciously or unconsciously, borrow their opinions of an artist's achievement from others. Now, whilst Florence has had the ear of the civilized world from the days of Dante to the age of Vasari, and from the age of Vasari to our own time, there has been no Siennese historian or critic who has caught the ear of Europe. Modern critics have taken, for the most part, the Florentine artists at their own countrymen's valuation, and have neglected the works of Duccio. Ruskin, for example, expended his beautiful gift of style in praising some inferior pictures of Giotto's school in terms which should only have been reserved for masterpieces. Florence has stolen for her own sons some of the credit that belonged to Siena, and under the spell of her literary charm many modern critics have acquiesced in the theft. Vasari postdated Duccio's career, and placed his biography of the Siennese after that of Agnolo Gaddi, after that of Orcagna, making him a contemporary of the later Giottesques. He robbed Duccio of one of his greatest works, giving it to Cimabue; and to the same Florentine master he ascribed some of the best works of Duccio's school. He said that the Siennese master's greatest followers were disciples of Giotto. Only in the last ten years have these injustices been fully and finally exposed. It is not to be wondered at that the public have not yet realized Duccio's position in the history of painting.

Again, Duccio's achievement is small in quantity. For a long period, too, his only known works of importance remained half hidden in Siena. Notable paintings by Giotto, on the other hand, are to be seen in Padua, in Assisi, in Rome, in Florence. And until lately the foreign travelers that found their way to Florence were ten times greater in number than those who visited Siena.

Finally, when the work of reparation is complete, Duccio's just fame can never rival that of Giotto, for the simple reason that Duccio was not a fresco-painter, that he never successfully accomplished vast schemes of monumental decoration. But in his own sphere, in tempera painting, Duccio had no superior among his contemporaries. And when we contemplate some of the figures of saints in his great 'Majestas' we cannot but be filled with regret that he did not apply himself to that branch of the painter's art which Michael Angelo rightly considered to be the nobler.

The Works of Duccio

DESCRIPTIONS OF THE PLATES

'VIRGIN AND CHILD'

PLATE I

THIS charming little Madonna picture which hangs in the first hall of the Siena Academy is doubtless an early work of Duccio's, and for that reason alone very important in the study of his artistic development. It measures hardly a foot in either height or breadth. Against a gold-tiled background

[200]

the Virgin sits enthroned in a natural attitude, holding the Child on her left knee, while two angels stand guard on either hand. The Child extends His right hand in blessing to three Franciscan monks prostrate at the Virgin's feet, while with His other hand He childishly clasps that of His Mother. The Madonna's dress is maroon in color, the mantle of dark blue, the folds edged with gold. Like the Child in the great picture of the 'Majestas,' He is here also clothed in a mauve-colored dress. The angels on the right wear dark blue with gold borders; those on the left, mauve, the upper one with a blue scarf over the shoulder. There is a touch of scarlet on their wings and the cushion of the throne is also of scarlet. The throne itself is of carved wood similar in character and design, with its high footstool, to that of the Rucellai Madonna (plate III).

Miss Lucy Olcott in the artistic half of the 'Guide to Siena,' which was her portion of the book, writes that the picture shows "at once, the immense superiority of his art over that of his Tuscan predecessors. Nothing could be more delicate than the color and execution of this damaged little panel; nothing, again, more truly Byzantine in feeling. The figure of the Virgin is particularly graceful and the flow of her drapery exquisite."

'THE CRUCIFIXION'

PLATE II

OF the panel depicting 'The Crucifixion,' Mr. Langton Douglas writes: "In the 'Crucifixion' we see one of the most dramatic, the most impressive conceptions of the scene that is to be met with in the whole range of Italian art. The modeling of the figure of the Christ shows us that Duccio's rendering of the draped form is based upon a knowledge of the structure of the human body more accurate than that of Giotto. The figures below the cross are well grouped. Here and there we find several Byzantine types, especially in the heads of the old men; but the group of the three Marys is freshly conceived, and is full of deep feeling. In the simple, massive folds of the drapery of the Mary who supports the Virgin we find further evidence of the influence of the Gothic sculptors. The color of the whole composition is harmonious. The whole scene is finely realized; and in his rendering of it the artist succeeds in imparting to us the emotions with which the great world-tragedy inspired him."

'MADONNA,' RUCELLAI CHAPEL, S. MARIA NOVELLA

PLATE III

DR. J. P. RICHTER, in his 'Lectures on the National Gallery,' writes: "The various works which he (Vasari) ascribed to him (Cimabue) are so heterogeneous in character that it is absolutely impossible that they should come from one and the same hand. He mentions as Cimabue's masterpiece the large Madonna picture in the Rucellai Chapel of the Church of Santa Maria Novella, in Florence. This is undoubtedly one of the finest and most important works of the early Trecento; but, if we subject it to a detailed and critical examination, which, in fact, owing to the gloom of the chapel, is only possible on a clear summer's day, it will be found that, as regards style, it differs in nothing from the genuine, fully authenticated altar-piece of the great Siene-
[201]

Duccio, formerly in the cathedral, but now preserved in the Opera del Duomo, at Siena.

"The similarity is most striking in the type of the Christ-child and the angels. The color of the child's drapery is that of delicate peach-blossom; it is eminently characteristic of Duccio's palette, and of that of no other of the great Trecenti.

"In short, it would be impossible for an unbiased critic to explain this celebrated picture otherwise than as a work by Duccio; while even those who should refuse their assent to this conclusion would be compelled at least to admit that the Florentine Cimabue, who has so long passed as the author of the picture, here shows himself to have been the closest and most faithful pupil, follower, or imitator of the Sienese.

"But in that case even Dante would be wrong in coupling the unoriginal, dependent Cimabue with such a master as Giotto.

"On the other hand, a certain degree of support for the assertion that Duccio was the author of the picture can be derived from a document of the year 1285, in which it appears that a Florentine Guild of that time commissioned the Sienese artist Duccio di Buoninsegna to paint a large altarpiece (*quandam tabulam magnam*), with the figure of the Virgin and Child, for this very church of Santa Maria Novella (*figura beate Marie Virginis et ejus omnipotentis Filii et aliis figuris*). This valuable document is still in existence in the State archives at Florence; and has been published by Milanese in 1854, in the first volume of the 'Documenti per la Storia dell' arte Senese,' and the name of the artist is therein entered as being 'Duccio, the son of Boninsegna, painter from Siena.'

"That a commission for an altar-piece should then have been given in Florence to a Sienese artist need not surprise us, when we reflect that, before the entry of Giotto upon the scene, Florentine art could in no way pretend to rival that of Siena."

Mr. Roger E. Fry still firmly believes that this picture is an original by Cimabue. In a foot-note to an article on Giotto written for 'The Monthly Review' he points out the peculiarities of this picture which are not in his opinion characteristic of Duccio. "The eye," he says, "has the upper eyelid strongly marked; it has a peculiarly languishing expression, due in part to the large, elliptical iris (Duccio's eyes have a small, bright, round iris with a keen expression); the nose is distinctly articulated into three segments; the mouth is generally slewed round from the perpendicular; the hands are curiously curved, and in all the Madonnas clutch the supports of the throne; the hair bows seen upon the halos have a constant and quite peculiar shape; the drapery is designed in rectilinear triangular folds, very different from Duccio's more sinuous and flowing line. The folds of the drapery where they come to the contour of the figure have no effect upon the form of the outline, an error which Duccio never makes. Finally, the thrones in all these pictures have a constant form; they are made of turned wood with a high footstool, and are seen from the side; Duccio's is of stone and seen from the front."

This argument Mr. Langton Douglas answers in an appendix to his 'His-

tory of Siena.' All these "peculiarities" the latter critic thinks are found in the small, early Madonna picture of Duccio's in the Sienese Academy (plate I). He further writes:

"Mr. Roger Fry, in fact, has taken Duccio's last great work, a picture painted twenty-five years after the Rucellai 'Madonna,' as the form of Duccio's style, and has neglected the master's early works in Siena. In an age of rapid transition, the style of an artist who is himself a great innovator naturally undergoes some modifications. The peculiarities so admirably observed by Mr. Fry in the picture at Florence are some of the characteristics of Duccio's early manner. Living in the city which Giovanni Pisano had made his home, his style underwent some modifications. He studied more and more the structure of the human figure under northern influences. He became less Byzantine and more Gothic. The lines of his draperies become more graceful, more sinuous. The expressions of his 'Madonnas' become less languid, less detached and impassive. In his Saints and Virgins we find more humanity, more expression of emotion, than in his earlier works. The movement in architecture shows itself, too, in the thrones he designs. When he painted the 'Majestas' Duccio had largely emancipated himself from Byzantine convention, and had acquired a greater command of his medium. To gain a knowledge of Duccio's early style one must not only study the great altar-piece in the Opera del Duomo — though even that picture, painted a quarter of a century later, is unmistakably related to the Rucellai 'Madonna,' — he must make himself thoroughly acquainted with the early works of Duccio and of Duccio's school."

'Masters in Art,' by including a plate of the Rucellai Madonna, does not necessarily thereby take the stand that the picture is a work of Duccio rather than of Cimabue. Two historians of S. Maria Novella, P. Fineschi writing in 1790, and J. Wood Brown in 1902, are of the opinion that the work is by Duccio. Besides Dr. Richter and Mr. Langton Douglas, Signor Adolfo Venturi and Dr. Wickhoff of Vienna incline to this point of view, while Mr. Berenson does not include it in his lists.

'THE NATIVITY'

PLATE IV

THE Berlin Museum acquired in Florence in 1884 a small panel by Duccio in three parts, representing the birth of Christ, with full-length figures of the prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel on either side. Our plate represents the central part only. "This picture," writes Herr Bode, "formed in the beginning a part of the celebrated altar-piece by Duccio, of the Cathedral of Siena, which fact is established beyond doubt by the agreement that it has with the latter in several respects — in the movement, form, and disposition of the figures. The discovery of this panel has been the turning-point upon which they have attempted to reconstruct in a satisfactory manner the *ensemble* of the cathedral picture. Below the great figure in the middle, representing the Madonna enthroned, there were seven scenes from the infancy of Christ, separated one from the other by prophets. Above the principal picture were ranged, in like manner, seven compositions, relating to the death

of the Virgin and the busts of the Apostles; upon the reverse of the picture were painted scenes from the Life and Passion of Jesus Christ.

"The 'Birth of Christ' of the Berlin Collection shows how much Duccio, even in his accessory figures, still holds to Byzantine models; but the animation which he gives to all the figures, the manner with which he fills us with emotion, the happy disposition of his rich and strong colors, the charm of his youthful heads, and the grand character of his figures of prophets prove that it is with reason that we venerate Duccio as the emancipator of art delivered from its Byzantine fetters, and as the founder of an independent school."

And Signor Venturi writes: "'The Nativity' in the Friedrich Museum in Berlin corresponds, more than other representations, to the mosaic of Pietro Cavallini at Santa Maria in Trastevere, and to the frescos of the upper church of St. Francis at Assisi; but there is added the scene of the godmothers who wash the Child, as we see, for example, in the mosaic of the Church of the Martorana at Palermo."

'TRIPTYCH'

PLATE V

"AMONG his pictures in the National Gallery," writes Dr. Richter, "the first place must be assigned to the little triptych representing the Madonna and Child, with the Saints Domenico and Catharine of Alexandria at the sides. The first thing that strikes us in the Madonna is her thoroughly Oriental type of head, the long, oval form of the face, the long, aquiline nose, the small mouth, and the beautiful, large eyes, which are all typical of Byzantine art; and not less so the outlines, which flow in an almost unbroken line; the drawing of the hands, with the long, tapering fingers, has also a Byzantine character.

"Not so the Child. A conception like this of the Infant Saviour is not met with, as far as I know, in the whole range of Byzantine art from the fifth century onwards. The relation of the Child to His Mother, as here represented, the gesture of childlike love, contrasting with the expression of melancholy in her face — which, perhaps, constitutes the principal charm of the picture — is an innovation in Byzantine as well as in Italian art. This motive does not occur in the work of Niccolò Pisano, the great sculptor of the preceding era, who had executed a famous work in the Cathedral of Siena some twenty years previously; we find it, however, in contemporary Gothic sculpture of France; a very characteristic example is in the South Kensington Museum, a charming little ivory of the Madonna, standing with the Child in her arms.

"The arrangement of the drapery in the Madonna's lap in Duccio's picture may also be said to be Gothic in style."

'THE MAJESTAS'

PLATE VI

IN this large panel, seven by fourteen feet long, Duccio, as the name 'Majesty' implies, placed the Virgin and Child, enthroned with hierarchic dignity in the center of the picture, in the midst of three tiers of saints and angels. Those angels immediately around the throne cling to it as they gaze

in loving adoration on the Infant Saviour. The Virgin is clothed in the conventional red dress and blue mantle that usage always gave her in the Middle Ages and the early years of the Renaissance, though they are richly embroidered and her dress shows hatchings in gold where it protrudes below her mantle. The Christ-child wears a muslin veil of the most exquisite violet color shot with gold, which has kept its tone in spite of the years that have elapsed since its execution. The throne in this picture is marble inlaid with Cosmati work. On the Madonna's right in the middle tier stand Saints John the Evangelist, Paul, and Catherine; on her left, John the Baptist, Peter, and Agnes; while below kneel Saints Savinus and Ansanus on her right, Saints Crescentius and Victorius on her left, the patron saints of Siena, and described by Signors Crowe and Cavalcaselle as the "feeblest and slenderest" figures in the pictures.

The same critics have described the picture as a whole at length, as follows: "In the distribution of the principal scene of his altar-piece, in the prominent stature of the Virgin enthroned in the midst of a triple row of angels and saints, Duccio preserved the order which was considered sacred at his time. Transforming, however, the art of his predecessors, he gave to the Virgin a regular shape and good proportions. The drapery of her mantle is simple and well cast, and her attitude in the carriage of the Saviour graceful and easy. The face of the latter is gentle, plump, and regular, the forehead full, and the short locks curly. A small mouth, and eyes no longer expressing terror or immobility in their gaze, contrast favorably with previous efforts at Siena. The action of the Infant is natural and kindly. The group has more grace than majesty or solemnity, and thus, from the very rise of the school, its chief peculiarity was apparent. Broad muscular forms, heads generally large in contrast with the frame, round eyes imparting an expression of stern gravity, marked features, massive knotted hair and beards, characterize as of old the figures of Peter and Paul, as they stand by the Virgin. A wild austerity appears in the features of St. John the Baptist; but face, form, and character are in the mold of the old period. A more rational definition of detail in the nude, in the articulations and extremities, than hitherto, a tendency to smallness in the latter, are noticeable in the principal figures and in the subordinate ones in the pediment. But Duccio was better in females, whose attitudes and proportions are truer and more correct than those of males. A feminine reserve, a soft feeling in the long, narrow faces in spite of aquiline profiles, gentleness rather than grace, make them pleasing; whilst draperies of good lines, and free from angularity, contribute by their arrangement about the head and frame to an elegant ensemble. Large, oval heads with hair brushed back and bound by cinctures, which fling the locks profusely down, a thin neck, slender hands and fingers, betray in Duccio a partiality for the consecrated type of angels. Yet even these are improved by softness of features or tenderness of expression; and those whose heads may be seen reposing so confidently on the back of the Virgin's throne are not without charm. A new feeling was thus infused into the antique mold, producing a novel character at times, disclosing the earnestness of the struggle for a change at others.

Drawn in with excessive firmness, yet with the minutest care, the figures reveal in Duccio the cleanliness of a Dutchman, whilst the exquisite tracery of ornament and embroidery prove his taste and patience, his anxiety to use none but the very choicest materials. Fused and rounded with the utmost labor, the tones combine powerful color with lucid softness; but the verde underground exercises its usual influence, peering through the lights and glazes and lowering the general key of harmony. A certain flatness, caused by the absence of sufficient relief, is likewise striking, whilst at the same time the planes of light and shade remain somewhat detached. To resume, color was already the best feature of the school thus founded by Duccio. A characteristic diversity marked the treatment of male and female figures, and ornament was tastefully but abundantly used."

Above, on either side of the throne, in arched panels, are half-lengths of ten of the Apostles.

'THE BURIAL OF THE VIRGIN'

PLATE VII

THIS is one of the small panels that was thought formerly to have been a part of the predella of the 'Majestas.' Since the discovery of the 'Nativity' modern German criticism has reconstructed the altar-piece to make this one of seven relating to the death of the Virgin, which stood above the central panel, and an eighth in the pinnacle. In that case the ten half-lengths of Apostles as they now stand should be raised so as to be put above these seven. It is supposed that two panels of Apostles are missing.

The legends of the Madonna tell us that she lived for twenty-four years after the Pentecost on Mt. Sion, regularly visiting the scene of her Son's Life and Passion; and that, greatly desiring to see Him, the angel Gabriel appeared to her holding in his hand a palm which branched into seven stars, telling her that in three days her wish should be granted, and commanding that the palm-branch be carried before her bier. The Virgin then asked two favors — first, that she might see the apostles gathered together before her death, that she might die in their presence, and in dying that she should not see death. These wishes were also granted, St. John the Evangelist being first transported into her presence on a cloud from Ephesus, where he was preaching, and then the other disciples. The Lord commanded the apostles to carry her body to the Valley of Jehosaphat and lay it in a new tomb, and to watch beside it three days, after which the Lord and a host of angels appeared and carried her soul and body up into heaven. There are, as we have seen, eight panels in all, representing the last days and the funeral rites of the Virgin. This one represents that moment when the apostles laid her body in the tomb.

The panel is charming in color, as is all the work of Duccio. The panels, one and all, gleam with dark but brilliant tones — green, and blue, and gold. Mr. Timothy Cole, in the description of his engraving of this panel in 'Old Italian Masters,' has so charmingly described the color in detail that we quote it entire:

"In some instances his coloring is Titianesque — warm, lustrous, and deep. The garment of the Virgin in the entombment is a deep blue, of a

most charming hue. That of the apostle next to Peter and immediately above the head of the Virgin is also a blue, but of a different, warmer, and softer tone, so that here, for instance, is a relief of color very subtle and harmonious. That of the apostle John, who holds the palm-branch, is a rose-pink in the high lights, shading to a deeper red. The contrast this makes with the lovely blues is the most pleasing thing imaginable to look upon. Now the garments of the apostle whose head comes just above the stars of the palm-branch are also red, similar to the deep shading in John's garment; but there is a softness of tone about it that gives just the proper relief to the latter. Then the palm-branch, of which the stars are gold, is a delicious, soft, tender green, shading gently deeper to one side, and this again is properly relieved against the deeper green of the garment of the apostle the top of whose head comes just behind three of the stars. This apostle, from the type of his face and his long hair, is evidently James, the brother of our Lord. The garment of the one next to him, whose hand comes in proximity with those of the Virgin, is a charming mixture of warm purple and greenish-blue tints. That of the one next to him is of a warm brown, well relieved against the brownish shadows of the rock behind. So on throughout — always a pleasing variety and subtle relief of color. The marble tomb is of a reddish, warm tone, roughly hewn, as I have engraved it. The trees, carefully worked up in detail, are of various shades of lustrous green, and the sky and glories round the heads are gold. The flesh-tints are warm brownish yellows, while the flesh of the Virgin is relieved from that of the others, being deader in tone. The whole is a most harmonious combination of color — a true symphony in color."

'THE BETRAYAL'

PLATE VIII

THE 'Betrayal' is one of the many panels illustrating the Passion of Christ. They each measure eighteen by twenty-one inches, and the figures average about nine inches high. Mr. Berenson takes this panel to point out the artist's power of grouping both as a means of illustration and as forming a pleasing arrangement of mass and line. Mr. Berenson writes:

"Motionless, in the middle of the foreground, we see the figure of Christ. The slim and supple Judas entwines Him in an embrace, while the lightly clad soldiers lay hands on Him, the guards crowd round Him, and the Pharisee elders at the sight of His face, which betrays no feeling but pity, start back in horrified consternation. Meanwhile, on the left, hot-tempered Peter rushes at a soldier with his knife, and, on the right, the disciples in a crowded flock scurry away, only the most courageous venturing to look back. We have here two masses of men, and in each the action and expression are kept so clear that to mistake them would imply sheer want of wits. . . . What compactness and dignity are given to the mass in which we find Christ, by the two tufted trees that surmount it! Without them, the group would look dwarfed and heavy. Note that the most important figure here, that of Christ, stands directly under one of these trees, which occupies the middle of the whole composition. See how this tree serves, not only to converge all the lines upon His head, but helps, by being in continuous upward movement with Him, to

heighten His figure. And what a glamor of beauty is lent to the scene by the lances and torches of the soldiers — lines that are and are not parallel — an effect so easily attained, yet counting for so much, not only here, but in numerous compositions ranging through art, from the Pompeian 'Battle of Alexander' to the 'Lancers' of Velasquez!"

THE INCREDULITY OF THOMAS

PLATE IX

THIS is another of the panels which decorated the reverse side of the 'Majestas.' With 'The Betrayal' it equally well represents the master's power of composition. Mr. Berenson thus describes it: "Christ, with right arm uplifted, appears baring the wound in His side to the impudent touch of His doubting disciple. These two figures stand out by themselves, and to right and left, more crowded on one side, more scattered on the other, stand the remaining disciples, so arranged that we get the expression on each face." A little further on he highly extols the panel, when he writes: "'The Incrudulity of Thomas' would be brought home to us as a mere historical episode nearly as well if the masses made by the figures were not so rhythmically divided, if a façade of just the right size and shape did not give the entire group the exact background it needed. The expression of Christ and His attitude would have been no different if He did not stand directly under the peak of a pediment, whose height magnifies His own stature, or were not seen against an arched door, which frames Him in and separates Him from the bystanders, thus making Him more strikingly the center of attention. Nor, as the mere telling of a tale, would much have been lost if the composition were comprised in a square, instead of being on a panel, that begins, halfway up its height, to slope inward, thus emphasizing those lines of the sloping roof which have, in their turn, given distinction to the figure of Christ. Even with all this, the sloping lines of the panel might have been continued until they met high above in a peak. But this would have had many unhappy results, among them one most unhappy. The center of attention, the point at which all the lines tend to converge, would no longer have been the head of Christ, but a spot high above Him in the pediment. There would have been a conflict between the inclination of our eyes to rest on the spot marked out for them by the tendency of the dominant lines and the desire of our hearts to dwell in rapt contemplation upon the point of highest spiritual interest, the face of Christ. This picture, then, does much besides telling its story: it is a composition so subtle in its effects of mass and line that we shall scarcely find its like — at least outside the work of one other artist, that artist also a Central Italian, and holding the place among the Renaissance masters of that region which Duccio held among those of the Middle Ages — I refer, of course, to Raphael."

ANGEL'S HEAD [DETAIL OF 'MAJESTAS']

PLATE X

THIS full-faced head which we have chosen to illustrate as typical of the company of angels in the 'Majestas' is that one nearest the throne on the Virgin's left hand in the middle tier. She stands with one hand resting on

the carved ornament of the throne, gazing intently and earnestly at the spectator. To gain variety in their poses, doubtless, the artist has directed the attention of several of the angels away from the central figures, while those angels who cling fondly to the back of the throne look tenderly and lovingly down on the Christ-child in His Mother's arms. This angel well illustrates Duccio's conception of an angel, grave, beautiful, and somewhat melancholy. The head is relieved against a disk of solid gold, chased with a beautiful decorative design, which forms the halo. The hair, abundant and curly, is tastefully and carefully arranged in a manner similar to that of the other angels, all of whom wear bands of rose color or blue, with jewels in the center. The front locks are gracefully rolled back and fall low in the neck to enframe a face which is slightly Byzantine, with its oval eyes, long, aquiline nose, and small mouth, but showing great charm and beauty, which is characteristic of all Duccio's female heads, and those of the whole Sienese school who followed him.

They all wear rich mantles, and carry ivory scepters, and Signor Venturi calls attention to the fact that this company of angels "adore the divine group, but do not chant praises, nor sing hosannas; they surround the throne in silence."

A LIST OF THE PRINCIPAL PAINTINGS BY DUCCIO
WITH THEIR PRESENT LOCATIONS

ENGLAND. THE KING: Triptych — LONDON, NATIONAL GALLERY: Triptych (Plate v); The Annunciation; Christ Healing the Blind; The Transfiguration — LONDON, MR. BENSON: (four predelle) The Raising of Lazarus; The Miraculous Draught of Fishes; Christ and the Samaritan Woman; The Temptation — LONDON, LORD CRAWFORD: The Crucifixion — GERMANY. BERLIN GALLERY: The Nativity (Plate iv) and Two Saints — ITALY. FLORENCE, SANTA MARIA NOVELLA: Madonna (Plate iii) (?) — ROME, COLLECTION OF COUNT STROGANOFF: Virgin and Child — SIENA, ACADEMIA: Small Madonna Enthroned (Plate i); Two panels with Saints; Madonna with Four Saints; Triptych; Polyptych — SIENA, CATHEDRAL MUSEUM: The Majestas (Plates ii, vi, vii, viii, ix, and x), formerly in the cathedral — SIENA, THE ABBEY OF SANT' EUGENIO, SACRISTY: Madonna — SIENA, THE FRATERNITY OF THE MADONNA, BELOW THE CRYPT OF THE HOSPITAL: The Crucifixion; The Entombment, The Flagellation (originally a triptych, now scattered).

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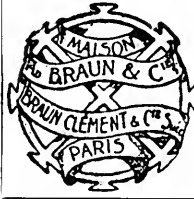
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